

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE  
Transcriber's Office

March 31, 1998

LB 204

appreciate Senator Chambers' comments and I agree with some of them. I agree that there have been mistakes on the sex offender registry. I am aware of those as well. I'm also aware of situations where people have tried to run out a sex offender who has moved into a neighborhood and have been very concerned and upset about it, in some cases rightfully so, in some cases not so because we have to understand, as I said earlier, that not all of these people are unable to be treated and have their lives turned around. We have to recognize that for many of these they go through the treatment program, 90-plus percent will not again strike or victimize anybody else. So for those individuals who have gone through treatment, who have turned their lives around, we must try to embrace them and try to not shun them in a way as Senator Chambers said. But we also have to recognize that of those 80 percent that have no treatment, these are individuals who have a difficulty, have a problem, have a mental illness, go into the system, have nothing done about it and are released and we're not to be surprised when they strike again. Now I understand Senator Chambers' concern about taking these individuals and trying to punish them. This bill, what I was offering, said that if there's a way to treat them, we will treat them. We will find a way to do that and that's what we need to do. But if we aren't able to treat, in some cases we are simply not able to treat, then we must hold them away from the public and that's not an attempt to punish as much as it is an attempt to protect the public from future harm. In 1996, 111 new sex offenders were incarcerated in Nebraska; 54 refused treatment. They didn't even want to try to be treated for their difficulty. Twenty-seven would not even admit they had committed a crime and that disqualified them from treatment. Only 28 out of the 111 chose treatment. Now if you have been accused of and convicted of a crime and then are asked do you want treatment and you say, no, or you say I didn't do anything, I didn't commit the crime, yet you've been convicted of it, I think you're going to see that there will be a problem in the future. And I understand the lofty goals that Senator Chambers talked about, but there is a real goal here of trying to not have as many children and women in this state raped and victimized by sex offenders, repeat sex offenders who we know will strike again and we can intervene and do something about it. I think society has a responsibility to do something about it. This Legislature has a responsibility, will not carry on